

William Miller House (Avondale)
East side of Elliott Road, .2 mile
southwest of State Route 41 (Penn Avenue)
Avondale Borough
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5137

HABS
PA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WILLIAM MILLER HOUSE
AVONDALE

PA-5137

Location: Quarter mile on country road west of State Route #41, 100 yards south of crossing of U. S. Route #1 (Ellicott Street), Avondale Borough, Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Dr. Edward A. Webb, West State Street, Avondale, Chester County, Pa.

Brief Statement of Significance: This house has sections dating 1730 and 1771 by early Chester County settlers. An 1806 addition burnt in 1920's

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: House was built on land from his father by William Miller (1698-1768). His son inherited the place and added the third floor in 1771, he being William Miller, Jr. (1737-1781). His wife and daughters continued there, she dying 1798, and a daughter in 1780, leaving Mary Miller who married Thomas Ellicott. She died 1855, and he in 1859. The place was sold by the heirs to Josiah Phillips; he sold to B. F. Wickereham; and in 1865 he sold to Chandler Hall and J. D. Yerkes, G. S. Jones buying out C. Hall shortly after. Jones and Yerkes divided the large tract into 23 smaller ones; the mansion and 220 acres was sold to Joel D. Pusey after the death of Jones in 1876.
2. Date of erection: 1730 and 1771.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers etc.: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction etc.: The two and a half story house was built in 1730, and a full three and a half story house completed in 1771. The two and a half story kitchen wing to the north was built at the time of the original house, 1730. The pent eaves extended across the house between the windows of the first and second stories as well as between those of the second and third floor. The original plaster cornice around the entire 1771 top story remains in excellent condition. Many of the windows of the original 1730 house have brick arches over them. The very large bake oven of the original 1730 house remains in excellent condition.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: As noted above, the 1771 third floor was added by the son of the builder, his initials appearing with the date 1771 across the south front of the house between the windows "W M 1771" just as do those of his father between the windows of the second floor "W M 1730" - both in black brick. In the mid-1920's a very large addition to the east was burned down, the addition having been built by the

daughter of William Miller, Jr., after her marriage to Thomas Ellicott in 1806. One doorway had been made in the east wall of the 1730 house to the north of the fireplace in the east room to lead into this addition. There had been a small arched window - this was bricked up after the fire but the remains of the little window can still be seen. The pent eaves are gone, but the house on the whole has been very little changed. The present slate roof on the south side of the main house dates from ca 1806. The two small attic windows of the 1730 house were also bricked up when the 1771 third floor was added.

6. Important old views and references:

Views: One early photograph, ca 1875, is in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. - it shows the large wing which was destroyed in the 1920's by fire. A number of 20th century photos are also to be found there.

References: Sources of information, all to be found in the Chester County Historical Society. Classified printed and manuscript clipping file under the heading: New Garden Township-Lands, and Miller Family.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: John and Mary (Ignew) Miller were in New Garden Township by 1709, having purchased 1013 acres there from Penn's agents. This extended from Toughkemamon to Avondale along present U. S. Route #1, southwards. John Miller died shortly after his election to the Assembly and the west part of the tract with the mill was left to his son William, who started his brick mansion in 1730 and who married in 1732. He had both a grist mill and saw mill and added to his acreage, becoming a wealthy man. The property is only a few miles from the circular boundary between Pennsylvania and Delaware and from the Mason-Dixon line between Pennsylvania and Maryland, over which there were many disputes between the two governments. There is a copy of a letter which mentions a meeting to be held at William Miller's house when he and his neighbors were to be questioned. It is interesting to note that the house of Williams's father is still standing, as well as that of his brother James. The oldest brother, Joseph, inherited the home farm - thus the homes of the three sons of the immigrant are still standing in the same township. Great stands of white oak on the tract were kept by the family until the Civil War, at which time it was cut off and sold chiefly in Wilmington for ship building.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None known.

D. Supplemental Material:

1. Copy of Original Manuscript in possession of the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa.

"Gentlemen

"As a most wicked Conspiracy hath been lately discovered to be carried on by several of the Inhabitants of your County in Conjunction with the Governor of Maryland with Intention by Force of Arms to

turn out of their Houses and Plantations the Persons and Familys of more than fifty of his Majestys Subjecte inhabiting this Province the execution of which it is very probable might have been attended with the most unhappy Consequencee to the People on both sides and to the very great disturbance of the King'e Peace. and as it is absolutely necessary in order to apply a propper Remedy to so dangerous a disorder that some Persons should use their Endeavors to discover any besides those whose Namee we already have that are concerned in the Aseociation and that any who are leaders and on whom others depend may be committed as disturbers of the Peace till they can find security or be otherside discharged by due Coursee of Law.

"I have thought propper to desire that you would do this acceptable service to your Country as well as to myeelf and believe it would be convenient for you to call at the house of Wm. Miller where I am informed Commissary Henderson and Benjamin Tasker made proposals to some of these Personse that you would examine the said Wm. Miller with Jeremiah Starr & Robert Smith or any other Persons likely to inform you the true state of this ill designed Affair. For the rest I leave it to your good management and desiring that no time may be lost either in the examination you shall make or the Report you will send me thereon. I conclude
Your very Loving Friend

Tho Penn

Philadelphia
November the 18th 1736

To Joseph Brinton, Caleb Cowpland, Joeeph Pennock
William Webb and John Taylor"

2. From Copy of Original in Regieter of Wills Office, Court House, West Chester, Pa. Photostat in Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa.

"An Inventory & Appraisement of the Goods & Chattles rights & Credits of William Miller late of the Township of Newgarden in the County of Cheeter & Province of Pennsylvania (Deceased) as Appraised by us the Subscribers the 20 and 22nd days of ye 9th mo 1768."

	L	S	d
To Furse in Cash, Wheat Flour & Bread Stuff	634	15	5
to his Wearing Apparel & Silver Watch	22	0	0
to Bille Bonds Notes &c	8524	3	3
to Book Debts			
to Riding Mare Saddle & Bridle	21	0	0
<u>Furniture in ye Parlour</u>			
to a Walnut Desk, to Money Weights & Scales	5	5	0
to a Walnut Ovel Table, to a do.	3	10	0
to a Tea Table, to Tea Ware & Silver Spoons	11	0	6
to a Couch & Bed, to a Cloaths Press	5	0	0
to Six Chairs, to Two Elbow Chairs	4	2	0
to a Spice Box & Tea Board, a Looking Glass	3	0	0
to hand Irons Fire Shovel & Tonga	1	2	6
to a Bible & Sundry other Books	1	0	0

to Sewels History to Geo: Fox's Journal	1 . 17 . 0
<u>In the Hall</u>	
To a Feather Bed & Furniture	12 . 0 . 0
to a Walnut Ovel Table, to Twelve Chairs	3 . 4 . 0
to a Looking Glass, to hand Irons	2 . 7 . 0
to Furniture on the Mantle Shelf	0 . 16 . 0
to Sunderies in ye Closet to Candle Snuffers	0 . 14 . 0
to an Eight Day Clock & Case	12 . 0 . 0
<u>In the Chamber up Stairs</u>	
To a Feather Bed & Furniture	16 . 0 . 0
to a high Case of Drawers, a little Walnut Table	5 . 10 . 0
to Seven Chairs, to an Elbow Chair	6 . 5 . 0
to a little Tea Table to a Looking Glass	2 . 7 . 0
to Brass hand Irons Shovel & Tongs, & hand Bellows	1 . 15 . 0
to a Trunk Glass Furniture on the Mantle Shelf	0 . 17 . 0
to Window Curtains &c.	0 . 15 . 0
<u>In ye Middle Room</u>	
To a Feather Bed & Furniture	18 . 0 . 0
to a little Table, to Three low Back Chairs	1 . 9 . 0
to Window Curtains &c.	0 . 15 . 0
<u>In ye Big Room up Stairs</u>	
To a Feather Bed & Furniture to a do	13 . 0 . 0
to six Chairs, to a high Case of Drawers	5 . 10 . 0
to a low Case of Drawers, to a Box & Frame	2 . 5 . 0
to a Looking Glass to a Trink	0 . 15 . 0
to hand Irons & Tongs	0 . 10 . 0
to Three Coverlids, to Two Blankets	3 . 0 . 0
<u>In the Kitchen up Stairs & down</u>	
To a Feather Bed & Furniture, to an Elbow Chair	8 . 5 . 0
to an Old Feather Bed & Furniture, to a do.	6 . 0 . 0
to Pewter & Tin Ware, Copper & Brass Kettles &c.	16 . 12 . 6
Iron Pots & Hooks, Pot Racks hand Irons	2 . 14 . 0
to Shovel & Tongs Box Iron Heaters & Smoothing Irons	1 . 2 . 0
Iron leadle Flesh fork & Bread Toaster, Dough Chest & Couch	13 . 0
Mortar & Pestle, Chopping knife, Old Cupboard	13 . 0
to Wooden Ware, Earthenware, Frying pan Grid Iron & Griddle	1 . 10 . 0
to Chairs to Eight Brass Candle Sticks	1 . 0 . 0
Four Iron Candle Sticks, Two Doz: knives & forks	0 . 10 . 0
<u>In the Garret & in the Cellar</u>	
To a Bed, Big Wheel Reel & Swifts	2 . 0 . 0
Other Lumber and Garret as Old Spinning Wheels, old Casks, Leather &c.	1 . 0 . 0
To Wool, to Wollen Yarn, to Idnend	3 . 19 . 0
to Cyder Vessels, to Glass Bottles	2 . 15 .
To three Tow Sheets	0 . 12 . 0
Two Flax do, three do, two hemp do	2 . 14 . 0
to Seven pair of Coarse Pillow Cases, to Eight fine do.	0 . 15 . 0
to Two Coarse Table Cloaths, Four fine do	2 . 10 . 0
to Two Huckeback do, to Six Damask Napkins	1 . 9 . 0
to Eleven Diaper Napkins, to Seven Huckeback Towels	0 . 17 . 0
To Linnen Cloath in Pieces & Remnants	23 . 15 . 1
To Wollen do in Remnants	6 . 1 . 7

3. From Copy of Original in Register of Wills Office, Court House,
West Chester, Pa. Photostat in Chester County Historical
Society, West Chester, Pa.

"An Inventory & Appraisment of the Goods & Chattles Rights & Credits
of William Miller late of New Garden in the County of Chester Deceased
as Appraised by us the Subscribers mostly ye 9th & 10th : 2nd mo &
finished this 21:4 mo 1781."

	L s d
To Hard Money Cash Old Paper Currency	90.19.6
Wearing Apparel, horse Saddle & Bridle	49.10.0
Bille Bonds & Notes, with their Several Interests	
Cast up untill ye 1:2mo 1781	2929.17.0
Book debts	493.9 .6
<u>Furniture in the Dining Room</u>	
An Eight day Clock & Case, Silver Watch	21.0 .0
Couch & Bedding, Walnut Ovel Table	5.5 .0
A Squars Poplar Table, Small Walnut Stand	1.2 .6
Six Leather Bottom Chairs, two Winsor do.	3.5 .0
three Rush Bottom'd, a Looking Glass	2.2 .6
two hat Cases, hand Irons fire Shovel & tongs	1.5 .0
<u>Furniture in the Parlor</u>	
Desk, Walnut Ovel Table, Tea Table	7.5 .0
Eleven good rush bottom'd Chairs, large looking Glass	7.5 .0
Cloaths Prees, hand Irons fire Shovel & tongs	6.10.0
Books, Silver tankard, large Silver Spoon	26.0 .0
Six Silver Table Spoons, five do, Six Tea Spoons	10.10.0
fivs do, five do, one Middle Sized do., Tea Tongs	2.12.6
two Cases of Bottles, Some other Bottles	1.13.6
Cheny & Delf Bowls, Tea Ware &c.	4.10.0
Drinking Glasses, some dishes &c &c.	1.0 .0
<u>In the Entry</u> two old Cloaths Chests	0.5 .0
<u>E. Room Middle Story</u>	
Bed & Furniture, Window Curtains, Case of drawers	22.0 .0
two Glass Decanters, two Brase Candlesticks, Copper Coffy pot	0.7 .6
Six good Leather Bottom'd Chairs, Looking Glass	5.10.0
<u>Middle Room do.</u>	
Bed & Furniture, Dressing Table	12.15.0
Small Looking Glass	0 .5 .0
<u>West Room</u>	
Bed & Furniture - an Arm Chair & 1 lese do.	16.0 .0
Case of Drawers - Chamber Table	10.5 .0
Two small Trunks - looking Glass - window Curts	3.0 .0
hand irons, fire shovel & Tongs -saddle bags	2.5 .0
small Table	0.15.0
<u>East Room Third Story</u>	
Bed & Furniturs - Window Curtains - small Table	19.15.0
Looking Glass - plates, a dish, Queens & Stone ware &c.	2.16.0
<u>Middle Room</u>	
Bed & Furniture	9.0 .0
<u>West Room Third story</u>	
Bed & Furniture -do. do. -old case of Drawers	22.5.0

Looking Glass, large old Trunk & Chest	1.7 .6
old hand irons, two iron bound small Casks	0.15.0
<u>Kitchen upstairs</u>	
Bed & Furniture - Desk - Arm Chair	12.5 .0
Bed & Furniture - do. do.	11.0 .0
Three little Spinning Wheels - Spooling wheels & Swifts	2.15.0
Big spinning Wheel	0.5 .0
<u>Kitchen</u>	
Pewter - Quessns ware, Earthenware	12.3 .6
Iron Pots & hooks , Frying pan, sauss pan	3.0 .6
A Copper ksttle, & four Brass do. - two sause pans	6.10.0
Tsa kettls , Brass & iron Candle sticks & Snuffers	1.7 .0
Flat Irons & Stands , Wooden ware, Churn	2.5 .0
Tin ware, hand irons, firs shovle & Tongs	1.10.0
hand bellows, two box Irons, Steelyards	0.13.9
Old Couch, a Dough Trough, pot racks	1.0 .6
Griddle & grid iron, old Chairs & sundries elss	1.5 .0
knives & forks, Water Casks	1.5 .0
<u>Six pair of Flaxen Sheets much worn - Eight pair Tow do</u>	
Pillow Cases - Table linnen - Towels	8.7 .0
Gold Buttons &c, old silver Shoe ' knee buckles, & other old silver	4.8 .9
plated Spurrs	0.3 .9
14 black glass Bottles, powdering Tubs	0.13.6
Cheese press, sundry old Barrells, & other vessel &c.	0.10.0

4. "Village Record", West Chester, Pa., September 25, 1860:

"VERY VALUABLE CHESTER COUNTY PROPERTY AT PRIVATE SALE. THE LARGE AND WELL KNOWN FARM CALLED AVONDALE.

"The residence of the late THOMAS ELLICOTT, is now offered for sale. The property comprises about SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY ACRES, about one half of which is in cultivation, the other half in WOOD, embracing a body of chestnut, white oak, black walnut, hickory, and other timber, suitable for ship building, carriage making, and other purposes, such as is now rarely to be found. The farm is situated in Chester county, Pennsylvania, on the line of the Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad, about 36 miles from the former place, having a station upon it, to which three trains each way are now running daily. It is in the highest state of cultivation, and in point of productiveness, situation, and natural advantages is believed to be unsurpassed by any farm in the State of Pennsylvania. It is beautifully diversified with hill and meadow, with unfailing streams in every enclosure, and two valuable water powers, one of them being improved by a SAW MILL, and the other by a BANK MILL, both fronting directly upon public roads. There is an inexhaustible quarry of flag or building STONE upon the premises, which is worked with great facility, and several quarries of Limestones, now opened, with opportunity of opening as many more as might be desired, of very superior quality, both for land and for building purposes, and three large kilns for burning the same. The

MEADOW land comprises near TWO HUNDRED ACRES, equal for early and late pasturage to any in Chester county, and rarely or never affected by drought. The farm is divided into convenient fields by fences in a good state of repair. There are upon the place besides the Homestead, and a well arranged and convenient stone FARM HOUSE, FIVE TENANT HOUSES, a stone BLACKSMITH SHOP and DWELLING for Blacksmith, and a STORE with dwelling attached.

"THE HOMESTEAD BUILDINGS consist of a large and commodious three-story BRICK DWELLING, containing 17 rooms besides the garrets; a Stable, 40 feet square; a Granary, Wagon and Carriage House, of the same size; three Corn Cribbs, capable of holding in the ear, 2,500 bushels of corn; a BARN, 60 feet by 40 feet, and a Hay House and Stock Barn, 190 feet in length by 30 feet in width, capable of storing in the upper story more than one hundred tone of hay. The barns and granary are built of stone. The farm is situated in the heart of Chester county, the general high condition of cultivation and fertility of which is widely known and unsurpassed by any farming region in the United States. It has every advantage as a whole, for a splendid country residence or agricultural institution, and is well adapted for division into farms and country seats, the sites for building purposes being numerous and eligible. Its central position in regard to roads concentrating at the railroad depot upon it, is already making it a place of great business activity, and creating a demand for building lots, which in the hands of an enterprising purchaser, would soon make it a thriving village. For terms of sale or any further information, apply to the family upon the premises, who will show them to any one desiring to purchase, or JOSEPH P. WILSON, West Chester, or HENRY C. TOWNSEND, 811 Arch Street, Philadelphia.

"The above property will be sold altogether or in parts, being adapted by roads, streams, wood and location, for buildings for division into at least four beautiful farms.
September 1, 1860"

Prepared by Bart Anderson - August 1958
Curator, Chester County Historical Society

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: This house has retained most of the interior architectural details which date from 1730 and 1771 and is typical of a Chester county farmhouse.
2. Condition of Fabric: Fair as to looks; very good as to structural conditions except for pent eaves.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Three and a half stories;

45'3" across south front, 43'4" deep including the kitchen wing.

2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Brick. Date and initials across the south front of both the second and third stories and also wavy lines in the two gable ends, all of black brick.
4. Chimneys: All original - on the gable end of main house, on the north gable end of the kitchen and a fourth in the bake oven section.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All openings seem original.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All openings seem original. On the east wall two small arched windows on the first floor have been bricked up as have the two small windows of what had been the attic of the two and one-half story house - this was done when the full third floor was added.
6. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: Steep pitch; slate on the south slope of the main house, composition elsewhere.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Original - very fine plaster cornice.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Floor Plans: The first floor has a small entry and stair hall with a room in each end of the house and a large kitchen and bake oven room to the north. The second and third floors each have two large bedrooms with a small bedroom over the entry. The kitchen wing has two small rooms over it and attics are over the entire house.
2. Stairways: All in original places, some repairs.
3. Flooring: All original.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster and panel ends. Fireplaces have wood work missing in the west end of the house in the third floor and in the east end on the second floor.
5. Doorways and doors: Nearly all original.
6. Trim: Nearly all original.
7. Hardware: Nearly all original.

8. Lighting: Electricity has been installed.
9. Heating: All fireplaces are there, though several have been bricked up.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: House faces south on what had been excellent lawns and gardens until last years.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: Tenant house, barns, stables etc.
4. Walks, driveways etc.: None.
5. Landscaping, gardens etc.: Little left now, though it had had a fine garden and box wood.

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Curator, Chester County Historical Society